

The Video Monitor

Commemorating Camelot

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The 25th anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy this November will give the nation an occasion to reflect on one of its darkest moments. It may also provide a bonanza for the industries that trade on the public's penchant for nostalgia: Virtually every major book publisher, for example, has scheduled some evocation—pictorial, fictional or nonfictional—of the Kennedy era for this fall. And the home video industry, which did well with Marilyn and Elvis last year, is joining in the history-raking this fall with a steady stream of video remembrances. Each tape is or will be priced to sell, and each puts to use a distinctively different approach in telling the same tragic story.

Last week brought the first arrival, the sole big-screen selection to be announced thus far: "Four Days in November," a 1964 theatrical release (MGM/UA Home Video, \$29.95). Executive producer David L. Wolper compiled this somber two-hour history from newsreels, still photographs and other footage, brought together with actor Richard Basehart's narration and Elmer Bernstein's agitated score.

Even here, Wolper demonstrates the flair for drama that characterized his Liberty Weekend and Los Angeles Olympics spectacles: Lee Harvey Oswald's movements on the days in question are reconstructed through a point-of-view camera that puts viewers in the assassin's role, including a shot from the Texas schoolbook depository window through a power viewfinder that is trained on passengers in a convertible below.

A more straightforward approach is evident in this week's entry from CBS/Fox Video, "John F. Kennedy: The Commemorative Video Album," a made-for-video retrospective compiled under the auspices of CBS News. The 110-minute program (\$19.95) lists Don Hewitt of "60 Minutes" among its producers and includes narration from Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather and Harry Reasoner. The production makes extensive use of CBS News' archival footage, including Cronkite's emotional on-screen announcement of the president's death.

Scheduled for future release but unavailable for preview are "JFK Remembered" from Vestron Video (54 minutes, \$29.98), a previously broadcast ABC News production narrated by Peter Jen-

nings, and HBO Video's "Life at Camelot," the first video tie-in with Life magazine.

Finally, from a somewhat different perspective, this month also brought the video release of "Marilyn and the Kennedys," produced for British television under the title "Say Goodbye to the President," which seeks to link Marilyn Monroe's death with the Kennedy family and organized crime. The 71-minute, \$29.95 tape is offered by American Video.